

It's wintertime at Springbrook!

Snow swirls across the surface of the frozen pond. Cold wind prompts us to snuggle a little deeper into our insulated clothing...and maybe put on another layer! Even the animal tracks show signs of the slippery ice below the dusting of snow...one step, two steps, s_l_i_d_e_____. It is amusing to realize that we humans are not alone in this early winter ice-dance.

A thick white blanket covers everything in sight; tree branches, trails, sidewalks, benches. Sound is muffled, and all is eerily quiet, resting, waiting...
...and then it happens! The busses pull in, kids jump off, snowballs fly! Springbrook is alive and well in winter!

Songbirds flock to the feeders, having come to rely on the constant, easy source of sustenance. For some, going just one day without food could be fatal. Squirrels, deer, and even an opossum take advantage of the birdseed that has fallen to the ground. Does stand on hind legs beneath feeders and reach upward, keeping competitors at bay by striking out with their forelegs. Winter meals are serious business around here.

Hikes allow us to be part of the natural world in a season where food, water and shelter have become more urgent needs. Some of the "tracks" we see are actually tunnels beneath the snow, with a little hole every so often where a head has peeped out or a small mammal has popped out to scurry up the side of a tree and duck into an opening. Tracks and other animal signs indicate the search for food, the location of last night's bed, or even a life-or-death encounter between predator and prey.

Survival lessons take on a whole new meaning as January cold bites into damp mittens busily mounding snow onto fallen-limb frames. Imaginations run to a place where this shelter could save a life. Crawling inside proves it to be a warm, dry refuge from the elements.

The stillness of the frozen pond holds a lesson ...and a secret. Classes learn about ice safety to prevent an accident...and how to respond in case of one. When ice safety has been determined...out come the augers, strainers and ice fishing poles!
Fish are swimming just below our feet and ready to take our bait!

This winter, follow an animal's tracks to see where they lead. Learn a new outdoor skill like ice fishing, cross country skiing, or snow shoeing. Dress in layers, keep safety in mind, and get out there!

